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OO RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHLB #0648/01 1311930
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 101930Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1790
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2244
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2550
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BEIRUT 000648

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR A/S SILVERBERG AND PDAS WARLICK
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/KUMAR/PHEE
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/GAVITO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [UNSC](#) [EAIR](#) [SA](#) [IR](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: SINIORA TURNS CABINET DECISIONS OVER TO
ARMY

REF: A. BEIRUT 618

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 646

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, in his televised speech on May 10, criticized Hizballah for disregarding the will of the Lebanese people and called on the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to fulfill its duty of ensuring the security of Lebanon. Siniora also announced that the Cabinet's decisions on transferring the head of airport security and declaring Hizballah's fiber optics network illegal, which set off Hizballah-organized demonstrations on May 7, had not been finalized. He declared that the LAF would be responsible for implementing these decisions. The PM's advisor told us that this was "a delaying tactic."

[1](#)2. (C) Hours after the PM's address, the LAF issued a statement declaring responsibility for addressing these two Cabinet decisions on the head of airport security and the fiber optics network. The statement also asserts the LAF's role in protecting the security of the state. As of 2200, the tensions in Beirut appear somewhat lessened although there are reports of violence in Aley and north in Tripoli. LAF officers reported that the LAF is confused and complain there is a lack of information on facts on the ground. The LAF is also concerned about possible Sunni extremists moving out from the Palestinian refugee camps. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri told us he has pulled back his Amal fighters, while complaining that the homes of Syrian minorities in the north are reportedly being set afire by Saad Hariri's Future Movement supporters. Independent Shia Mufti of Tyre's office has been ransacked by the opposition. End summary.

BERRI TO PULL BACK
AMAL FIGHTERS

[1](#)3. (C) At 1945 on May 10, the Charge spoke with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. She asked for his reaction to the Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's televised address (para 15). Berri became stirred up, declaring, "Siniora lied! He said that the army would be responsible for handling the Cabinet's decisions (Ref A) on the head of airport security and Hizballah's fiber optics network, but I know that he sent the

file to the UN with a letter that has his signature on it!" Getting increasingly agitated, Berri stated, "The letter is not a fake! I have a copy and I saw his signature and I know what Siniora's signature looks like!" He then said that Amal MP Ali Hassan Khalil had explained to the media. (Note: In a 15-minute press conference, Khalil accused Siniora of fraud, blocking the dialogue, and obstructing electoral reform. End note.)

¶4. (C) In response to the Charge's mention of media coverage claiming that the opposition had agreed to abide by the army's declaration (para 10) and pull off of the streets, Berri confirmed the reports. He said he had asked Amal Movement fighters to withdraw in order to facilitate the role of the army to maintain law and order. Berri told the Charge that security is the most important thing, adding, "We don't have any other choice. But I am insisting upon the National Dialogue."

¶5. (C) The situation in Beirut is calm, Berri said, and would improve hour by hour. In fact, he said, he had just seen two LAF tanks pass by his compound in Ain Tinneh. Berri told the Charge th